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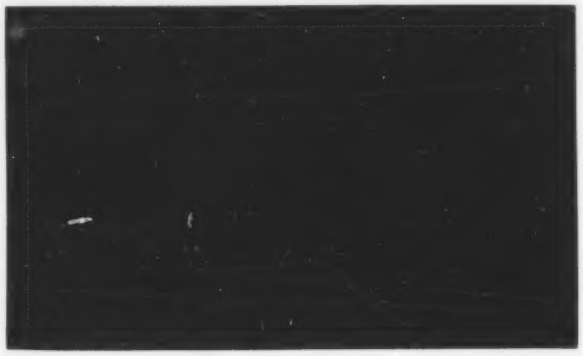
Research Report



Scarborough
Board of
Education

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FORMATIVE EVALUATION OF SCHOOL-BASED STAFF DEVELOPMENT: FOCUSED INTERVIEWS IN PILOT SCHOOLS

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Curriculum Implementation and
Staff Development**

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and General Editor

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Don Robb, Associate Superintendent of Program, provided the leadership and vision for the entire project. He also conducted the focused interviews with me and discussed the responses, prior to the writing of this report.

The members of the School-based Staff Development Committee took a lead role in all the Interviews and were most helpful in refining the Interview Questions. They are:

Donna Benson, Maplewood H.S.
Jeff Farber, Sir William Osler H.S.
Charlie Little, Kennedy P.S.
Jan Gray, West Rouge Jr.
Fred Huggett, Alexmuir Jr.
Holly Lipsett, W.A. Porter C.I.
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Dave Rowan, Sir Oliver Mowat C.I.
Mary Shaughnessy, Maplewood H.S.
Norma Sommerville, Dr. Marion Hillard Sr.
Bill Stadnyk, Co-ordinators' Representative
Dave Vallance, Emily Carr P.S.

Alyson Gillan, King Academy and Azza Hamid, Kennedy P.S. submitted comprehensive written responses.

Dr, Lorna Earl, Research Director, made a number of helpful suggestions and edited the report.

INTRODUCTION

The school-based Staff Development (SBSD) Pilot Project began in the 1990-91 school year with eight elementary and four secondary schools. The twelve schools were chosen, in May 1990, because their principal or vice-principal sat on the original School-based Staff Development Committee, which was investigating the feasibility of introducing the concept to Scarborough.

A subcommittee was responsible for writing, with the assistance of Ken Leithwood of OISE, a White Paper On School-based Staff Development (1990) which traced the history of school-based curriculum planning in Scarborough and examined a good deal of research related to staff development initiatives.

The pilot schools submitted proposals and budgets to Don Robb, Associate Superintendent of Program, based on criteria outlined in the White Paper. Don Robb and Peter Lipman, Project Director of Curriculum Implementation and Staff Development, weighed the proposals and budgets and allocated funds to the schools, with the secondary schools receiving an average of $4500 per school and the elementary schools receiving approximately $2000 each. These sums did not include costs of supply teachers or participation in non-residential conferences. Schools applied directly to Don Robb for non-residential conference participation and funding but continued to apply for residential conferences in the traditional manner.

In the Fall of 1990 Don Robb and Peter Lipman visited each of the schools to discuss initiatives and budget allocations. Although the committee met several times during the year, the schools independently ran their own projects in accordance with school needs. A number of representatives from the schools assisted Don Robb and Peter Lipman with presentations to Associate Superintendents/Schools, O.I.S.E. and Provincial Conferences.

Since this was a new approach to providing staff development, it was important to gather information from the pilot schools to provide direction and facilitate planning. To do this, the Research Department assisted the School-based Staff Development Committee with the preparation of focused interview questions. During May and June 1991, Don Robb and Peter Lipman visited the pilot schools and conducted of the interviews with school representatives. Normally, the principal and the staff members who have been most heavily involved with the project responded to the interview questions.

A complete list of questions and responses is contained in the Appendix to this report.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Because of the small number of schools involved, the major themes have been identified in the text of this report, and the specific responses are reported in the Appendix. Where a theme was supported by a majority of the schools, this has been highlighted in the text.

Overall Response

The schools were extremely positive in their response to this project, with 11 of the 12 schools indicating a "very positive" staff reaction. Half the schools noted that staffs were "enthusiastic" and expressed appreciation for Program Department efforts. One school noted only a "dawning interest" at this stage, although "those who benefitted saw the advantages".

Relationship to Curriculum Management Plan or Implementation Project

As one would expect, there was a wide variety of school initiatives. Elementary schools had already selected Curriculum Implementation Projects (CIPs) when the pilot project began, and the secondary schools had submitted written Curriculum Management Plans (CMPs) to Program Department. Nevertheless, in every case the school-based staff development initiatives were seen as a part of the school Curriculum Management Plan (this is consistent with the direction called for in Scarborough's CRDI Policy document of June 1988). One school noted that the curriculum plans and staff development are linked on paper but not in reality.

Benefits of School-based Staff Development

The schools identified a large number of benefits:

- Nine of the twelve schools reported that the **staff development initiative helped to focus the school's efforts on identified goals and needs.** Although the Implementation Project or CMP help to focus the school, the supporting school-designed staff development reinforced a specific focus and direction which all staff could see and support.

- An equal number of schools noted that **increased conference participation was an asset.** The schools believed that far more staff members were able to attend conferences than normal without the apprehension of being turned down by Program Department. Two schools reported that virtually every staff member attended at least one conference. Schools indicated that the conferences selected were directly related to the school's curriculum initiatives and therefore staff **attendance at conferences was a benefit to the whole school,** not just to the person who attended the conference.

- Three quarters of the schools reported **increased collaborative thinking and planning** on staff, and also noted an increased in staff cohesiveness, unity and ownership of curriculum planning. There was greatly **increased teacher participation and leadership as a result of this pilot project,** along with greater dialogue, shared decision-making, sharing of ideas and informal mentoring or peer coaching.

- Almost half the schools specifically noted **benefits to students.** The view of many of the schools was that students benefitted directly from improved instruction in areas such as literacy and co-operative group learning and indirectly from the increased staff planning, sharing, collaboration, classroom visitations, knowledge and unified expections which resulted from this project.

- One quarter of the schools perceived a **changing attitude toward Professional Development** in general. The project helped to overcome some cynicism regarding PD activities, and because the staff development initiatives were directly related to school goals and needs, there was a more receptive attitude to attending and to learning from PD sessions. This trend was reinforced because in-school personnel often led the workshops and assisted their colleagues.

A variety of other benefits were perceived by individual schools, including the "unearthing of talent on staff", an increased role for the school Curriculum Management Team (CMT), a breaking down of secondary school compartmentalization and greater awareness of the school's curriculum implementation project. See question #2 in the Appendix for a complete list of benefits.

Obstacles To Success

Although the schools were overwhelmingly positive in their response to this pilot project, the school representatives did identify a number of challenges or obstacles to success:

- Foremost amongst these concerns was a **lack of time**, which was identified by 9 of the 12 schools. Schools need to find time to plan, implement programs, share knowledge and skills, visit other teachers' classrooms and review and follow up on staff development activities. Another concern related to time was the appropriate use of PA days. Elementary schools expressed the concern that mandated centrally-designed staff development programs conflicted with the school-based plans and consumed time on PA days required for the effective implementation of the school plan.

- Three of the twelve schools noted that not all staff members are "on board" or as eager as the people on the CMT. There is a need to overcome a **cynical attitude about PD** in some cases.

- There was divided opinion about the **funds** available, with 3 schools identifying this as an obstacle, but 4 schools identifying in the general comment section of the interview that the funding was adequate (some schools did not spend all their funds).

- Several school identified initial "teething" or **bureaucratic problems**, mainly dealing with Program Department and in-school procedures regarding budgeting and conference application and approval.

  Other obstacles regarding staff pertain to **staff turnover**, which makes consistency difficult, the **divergent needs of staff** and **assuring appropriate coverage of classes** when teachers are released for staff development activities. There was some **difficulty sustaining interest** because of the many other activities, functions and celebrations taking place throughout the school year.

A number of other obstacles or challenges were observed by individual schools (see question #3 in the Appendix for a full listing).

School-based Staff Development Activities

The schools identified an enormous number of activities which would not have occurred unless the school was involved in the school-based staff development initiative.

- Half the schools pointed to the **increased conference attendance** by staff members who normally would not have applied or been accepted for participation. In almost half the schools **teachers designed and led workshops for the rest of the staff.** There was a substantial increase in **cross-grade and -division planning** in five of the eight elementary schools. Four of the schools were able to hold **staff retreats for curriculum review, development and implementation** and for teambuilding activities. A list of 45 other school activities can be found under question #4 in the Appendix.

Human and Material Resources

The focused interviews clearly demonstrate that in-school staff members became a major resource for all the schools (the chart under question #7 in the Appendix gives full details). TSAs and "Other Program Staff" - e.g., D. Robb, P. Lipman, S. Macpherson - were heavily employed, and of course conference participation was important. Co-ordinators (Judy Clarke assisted in half the schools) and the Research Department were involved in a number of schools. The schools did not make regular use of personnel from other boards of education or other "outside workshop leaders". Faculty of Education students were a great assistance, particularly in freeing teachers and creating time, in those schools which had special programs for them.

Schools did not spend as much money or time on material resources. A number of schools purchased general reference material, particularly in schools where there was a lack of appropriate professional reading material for the use of the staff. Two schools outlined the specific assistance of the Professional Library. Overall, the material resources did not appear to be as a high priority as the human resources required to conduct staff development programs.

Overall, schools were successful in obtaining the required human and material resources. There is a need, however, to locate appropriate conferences related to school initiatives and to prepare a list of individual resource people in Scarborough.

Preparations for 1991-92

Although most schools would not do much differently if they could start the project again, 3 schools did see the need for improved communication with staff and with other schools in the pilot project which have similar curriculum objectives. Others noted the need to be flexible, to plan well in advance, to have regular meetings and to examine their budget more carefully early in the year. A full list is contained in the response to Question #9 in the Appendix.

The schools had a good deal of advice for the 19 new participants in the project for 1991-92:

- Half the schools identified **communication with staff** as crucial. Many of the schools expressed the need to regularly keep staff informed of PD activities and directions, and to clarify the relationship of the staff development to the school CMP or CIP.

- Almost half the schools recommended that the project be kept **simple** and that staff development activities be **focused** and directly support the school CMP or CIP.

- A number of schools stressed the importance of **making sure all staff members understand and support** the project, of all staff being involved in the project, and of a needs assessment from staff, students and the community to set directions and identify needs.

- Schools were encouraged to **relax and let the plan emerge** since conditions and circumstances change and the school may not be able to follow the exact plan submitted to Program Department.

- Other advice concerned the need for **planning time, defining the role of the CMT** and the **formulation of mission and belief statements** which "bring together" the various curriculum and staff development initiatives. The **principal's key role** in organizing, supporting and encouraging was identified.

A full list of suggestions for new pilot schools is located in the Appendix following question #8.

Other Comments

Schools were convinced that school-based staff development "is the way to go" and that we have "come a long way in two years". The project was considered to be very successful and resulted in growth and awareness for both teachers and students.

There is a need for a compilation of available conferences and a list of appropriate Scarborough resource people.

The "grass roots" nature of the project, a more clearly defined role for the CMP and VP were also noted, along with the changing staff attitude toward both PD and toward the efforts of the Program Department.

At this point, one of the twelve schools is not satisfied with its progress in the School-based Staff Development Pilot Project.

APPENDIX

School-based Results from Staff Development Focused Interviews with 12 Pilot Schools, conducted in May and June 1991

Question 1 (A): What has been the focus of your school-based staff development pilot project this year?

Literacy Project (3)[1]
Co-operative small group learning (2)
Supporting the C.M.P. (2)
Personal growth leading to more effective student program
CRDI - future directions for school
School-based strategic planning process
Active Student Centred Learning
Self Esteem Through Visual Arts
Transition years a secondary focus
Literature-based programming integrated with all subjects
Collaborative process
Implement the Academy model as outlined in brochure

Question 1 (B): How is this project related to your school's Curriculum Management Plan or Implementation Project?

SBSD supports the implementation project (6)
It was the project one and the same (3)
Staff development supports rest of CMP (2)
Part of the written CMP
Address the 7 specific objectives outlined in CMP
Reflects school mission and belief statements
Are linked in intent and on paper but not in reality

[1]The actual number of each response is included in brackets.

Question 2: In your opinion, what have been the most beneficial effects of school-based staff development in your school?

More focused approach on goals, needs (9)
Much increased conference attendance and participation (9)
Collaborative thinking and planning (8)
Staff cohesiveness, unity, group identity (8)
Increased teacher involvement, participation, leadership (7)
Beneficial to students-eliminated learning roadblocks, improved self-esteem etc. (5)
Staff sharing of materials, ideas (5)
Control, planning of own staff development (4)
Staff ownership and decision-making (4)
Led to mentoring or buddying or peer coaching (4)
Staff more receptive to PD sessions; know reason for attending (4)
Increased teacher dialogue (3)
Having the money to fund appropriate staff development (3)
School-generated inservices (3)
Motivation, incentive to implement curriculum (3)
Increased classroom visitations (2)
Greater awareness of curriculum implementation project (2)
Growth and understanding (2)
Informal planning, networking, mentoring (2)
Able to be proactive within our own framework
"Special schools" historically felt staff development sessions not designed for them; this approach overcomes that feeling
Relates directly to school needs
Conference attendance directly related to school focus
Positive school climate
Four schools sharing ideas
Grass roots approach
Unearthed talents on staff
Able to take part in 4-day collaboration workshop
More incentive to work on curriculum and staff development
Increased role for CMT
SD opportunities available to people in Depts. where not normally available
Starts to break down compartmentalization
Assisted staff in using school library, resources
Library purchases directly related to staff needs
More awareness of other teachers' programs

Question 3: What have been the most significant obstacles to the success of school-based staff development?

Time to schedule regular meetings, plan and implement, share, follow up (9)
Some staff not on board and not as eager (3)
Money insuff cient (in one case for the 4 schools involved) (3)
PA Days used for Drug and Alcohol Awareness conflicted with school's SBSD plan (2)
Ensure coverage of classes provides appropriate learning experience for students (2)
Sustaining interest and energy with so much else going on in school (2)
Divergent staff interests and needs (2)
Securing and identifying resource personnel (2)
Staff turnover (2)
Lack of staff awareness
Need to overcome cynical attitude about PD
Support staff not on board
Staff accountability hard to address
Periods of time between PD Days frustrating
Large staff received same amount of money as smaller schools
Diversity of student needs
Need to attend workshops in teams, not alone
Need to find ways to share conference participation
Conference application and funding
Bureaucratic problems: secretary, money, procedures
Difficult to measure results of student achievement
Staff sometimes reticent to express what they want
Distinguishing between SBSD and what happened in school before
Process still in transition - not totally school-based
Lack of CMP focus
Staff unclear about Program Dept. decisions re SBSD
Need clear definition of what staff development is
Spread thin because of Transition Years initiative
Lack of a pattern or model to follow
Difficult to use prep time

Question 4: What kinds of activities have occurred in the school directly as a result of your involvement in the school-based staff development pilot project?

Many staff went to a conference (6)
In-services led/designed by staff members (5)
Cross grade and division work (5)
Staff retreats (4)
Outside resource people gave workshops (2)
Self-esteem conference participation
Able to meet school concerns and focus on issues
Literacy project indirectly supported by SBSD
Visits by D. Robb - perception that school is important to Board
Led to visits by other staff, articles written about school- profile and improved morale
More student activities - recycling
More building self-esteem activities
Students more respectful
Increased parental fundraising
More parental involvement
Long-term action plan created
More educational field trips
Staff members presented at NSDC Conference
School ran the Area PA Day
Chinese New Year celebration - off-shoot of project and SBSD
Classroom visitations between 4 schools
Increased level of professional reading by staff
Teachers able to attend human development program
Artfax experience
Communication lab
Staff development issues discussed for the first time
Literacy and self esteem project supported
More emphasis on basic level programs than in Board-wide staff development
School safety inservicing
OAC skills day
Curriculum writing - pairs, triads
New staff orientation program
Review of booster program
"Rainbow" student-teacher leadership would not have occurred to same degree
New staff able to work for a full day in June - set tone for September
Increased storytelling, drama, rap, publishing house - because of SBSD
Purchase of Fredwriter disks
More cross curricular planning and use of "Partners"
Heightened awareness of books studied by students
Staff meetings used for PD
"Circle Celebration" - all kids outside rotating talking to other students
Speech Arts used all year
Mentor-Monitor curriculum development
Touchstones pilot project
Corporate sponsors involvement
Triads for peer coaching
Independent learning development
Technological Studies renewal
Review and assessment of school-based curriculum planning
Introduction of broad range of teaching/learning strategies

Question 5: What has been the overall response to this project?

Very positive (11)
Staff enthusiastic, receptive and aware of professional growth (6)
Staff want to continue in project
More staff commitment
Students benefit from unified expectations of staff
Pleased with central office support - Robb, Lipman, Goldring, Smyth
Appreciated efforts of central office staff-Program Department
Dawning interest
Those who benefitted see the advantages

Question 6 (A): List any human and material resources you employed

Human

Own staff members (8)
Judy Clarke (6 - Values; Co-operative Learning; Goal clarification)
Peter Lipman (4 - Strategic Planning, Teambuilding)
Bob Barton (3 - Literacy)
FEUT Students (3)
Don Robb (2 - Strategic Planning)
Linda Goldspink (2 - Literacy)
Barb Howse (2 - Literacy)
Bonnie O'Donoghue (2 - Literacy)
Judy Woodhouse (2 - Co-operative Learning)
John Reynolds (2 - Special education and collaboration)
Const. John Sharpe (42 Division) and police (2)
Bill Stadnyk (2 - Artfax)
Linda Cameron (2 - Literacy)
John Hislop (2)
Professional Library Staff (2)
Susan Macpherson (Strategic Planning)
Bill Smyth (Special Education)
Earl Campbell (Board Directions)
Del Maize (Mentoring)
Doug Macmillan, Joyce Scott (Values)
Dave Pollard (Co-operative Learning)
Denise Overall (curriculum process)
J. Macleish (guidance, crisis situations)
Ray Bowers (duties and responsibilities of dept. heads)
ADART (drug and alcohol awareness)
Val Copeland (Drama)
Connie Edwards (conflict resolution)
Mary Shaughnessy, Gloria Baxter (Keeping Schools Safe)
Georgine Wannacott (self-esteem)
Dan Yashika (Literacy)

J. Lotteridge (Literacy)
Justin Lewis (Literacy)
Diane Wilson (Literacy)
Sonia Dunn (Literacy)
Patricia Quinlan; Emily Hearne; Shirley Fairfield; Jackie Wurtinberg (Literacy)
Chris Evans (Music)
Emily Hearne (On-line computers)
Ian Wallace
Bernice Thurman Hunter
Mark Holmes
TV Ontario
Larry Lezotte (in York Region)
Donna Waterworth (Gr.6 Drama)
Sue Vasey
Linda Pogue (Active Student-centred Learning) - North York
Dianne Gillies (Guidance)
Sharon Thurston
Ron Benson and JK -4 Centre
Danila Duliunas (Moderns)
Elizabeth Coelho - North York
David Pratt (Curriculum process)
Bill Peel, Neil Andersen (Computers in Education)
Transition Years Speakers
Gib Goodfellow
H. McCarthy
Johns Hopkins University (Touchstones Project)
Corporate Sponsors

Material

Staff general reference material (4)
Self-esteem package (from basic level literacy)
Harry Wong tapes on classroom management
Computers purchased (Blueprint funds)
"Together We Learn" for all Staff Members
Barbara Colorosso Tapes
Literacy reference materials
SWAP materials
School Law (OSSTF)
Film: Circles of Learning (Scarborough Board)
Publishers' Displays
Extensive library materials
Video: Wm. Purkey

Question 6 (B): What resources were you unable to obtain?

None (3)
Hard to identify appropriate conferences (2)
Sgt. Wes Ryan - non-confrontational mediation
S.O. from North York on Heads' responsibilities
Didn't visit colleagues in other schools (2)
We always find a way
Co-operative Learning resource application to primary division
Restricted only by time and money
Human resources -difficult to identify without a roster
More background literature, e.g., Leithwood, Planned Ed. Change
Co-operative Learning Magazine - never arrived
Barry and Carol Rolheiser Bennet - unavailable until 1992
Read - alongs
Science materials
ESL materials for regular classroom use
Selection of novels for classroom use
More conferences
Student Evaluation Profile (Benchmarks, Don Rutledge)
Peer Coaching materials (Napa Valley)

Question 7: To what extent were each of the following employed in the project?

Role	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Personnel in school	0	0	12
Co-ordinators	3	5	4
TSAs	1	3	8
Other Program Staff	1	3	8
Scarborough Personnel - Other Schools	4	6	2
Personnel from other Boards	7	5	0
Other Workshop Leaders	8	3	1
Conference Participation	0	4	8
Research Department	7	0	5
Other			
Police	0	1	0
FEUT students	0	0	2
Nippising College	0	0	1
York U. Students	0	0	1
Parent Volunteers	0	0	1
Corporate Sponsors	0	1	0

Question 8: What suggestions or advice do you have for schools which will join the project next year?

Regular lines of communication about project are important (6)
Make sure staff is committed (5)
Keep it simple - focus on project and curriculum objectives (5)
Shared decision-making process is important (4)
Involve all staff (3)
Needs assessment is important (3)
Relax - don't stick too closely to plan if not appropriate - let it evolve (2)
Base staff development on shared vision (2)
Encourage teachers to assume leadership (2)
Provide time for planning (2)
Make sure of link to school CMP (2)
Mission/beliefs statements helped to bring it together and are significant (2)
Co-ordinate with Federation PD (2)
Principal is key in organizing, motivating (2)
Need clearly defined system for applying for conferences
More direct reporting on conference participation
Important to do it in school time
Don't worry about "naysayers"
Understand it will take time to implement
Keep on top of procedures from beginning
Research the community's needs
Important to hold some sessions away from school
Stress both procticality and theory from the beginning
Be aware of activities of other schools in the project
Make sure pairs or teams attend conferences
Core group to assimilate information is crucial
Hold regular reviews of activities and use results in future planning
Staff enjoyed collaborative work periods
Have an activity early in the school year
Evolution to shared decision-making is difficult at first
CMT should discuss conference applications and participation
Look at culture of school
Have a monthly or term plan in front of staff
Have regular meeting times for SBSD team
Start planning early
Make sure budget is realistic
Project must be broad-based
Go slowly

Question 9: Is there anything you would do differently if you could start the project again?

More regular communication with staff (3)
Very little (3)
More communication with other schools in similar projects (2)
Don't waste energy on a few diehards in the first year
Make sure it is totally school-based; don't let outsiders set direction too early
Have parents involved more
Less time between activities
Free staff more to provide feedback from conferences
Need more help with demonstrations, not just theory (TSAs should model lessons)
Get money up front from Don Mason for conferences
Hold area Curriculum Conference earlier in school year
Be more flexible - not stick to original plan
Immerse CMT in issues early in school year
More classroom teachers without Position of Responsibility on CMT
Make CMT and SBSD team one unit
More concrete goal setting
Broadcast goals more often
Use weekly bulletin to publicize activities, accomplishments
Have regular meeting times
Timetable all grade 7 teachers off at the same time
More in-school time for groups to met
Have more professional literature available
Look at budget more carefully
Share costs to speakers with other schools
Research resource materials earlier

Question 10: Is there anything else related to the school-based staff development pilot project you would like to tell us?

Is very successful (5)
Money sufficient (4)
Teachers and students in school have grown, are more aware (3)
Calendar of conferences is needed (3)
List of resource personnel needed (2)
It is the right way to go (2)
Staff development has become part of the CMT and its role
VPs role has been consolidated
What will be the impact of the alternative structures?
Have come a long way in 2 years
Be sure to describe role of CMT
Very worthwhile experience
Real ownership comes through shared decision-making
Much better use of PA days

School culture and values are crucial to success
Stay with "grass roots" basis
Struggled to design plan for this year, but knew what to do for 1991-92
Staff pleasantly surprised with conference opportunities
SBSD helps to define role of CMT
Needs enthusiastic administrator/principal to support project
Need team approach, not just one administrator
Spending very little on food
Criteria for conference participation is difficult - meet needs of school, subjects, individuals
Heads reticent to get involved
Not thoroughly satisfied with progress so far
Need clarification of conference application procedures
Made curriculum project more successful
Have to be accountable
Staff now less resistant to change
Staff has more trust for the Board
PA Days must be for SBSD use only
Ready to handle conferences, including residential but especially non-residential